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ABSTRACT

Partly in response to the findings of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, partly as an outgrowth of its earlier efforts to widen monority opportunities and improve race relations, the Ford Foundation in the late 1960s and early 1970s supported a series of activities designed to enhance the content and the sensitivity of the media in relation to minorities. The projects took three main directions: (1) training of minority journalists; (2) opening broadcasting to more and better coverage of minority affairs by means of advocacy in the administration and interpretation of broadcast law; and, (3) supporting organizations committed to produce material about minorities and matters that concern them. This report summarizes the experience. Since 1967 a far greater number of nonwhites have had bylines in the press (though the American Society of Newspaper Editors reported in 1974 that probably no more than one per cent of the professional newsroom staff come from minority groups) and there are more minority-group members on television working as both journalists and entertainers. The communications industry may not become substantially more sensitive to the minority experience until members of the minorities attain policy-making positions, and so far very few have made it to the executive suites of the mass media. (Author/JM)

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Text by Gerald Astor

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ON JULY 29, 1967, while smoke still drifted over a number of riot-torn cities, President Lyndon B. Johnson met with an eleven-person commission he had appointed to look into the causes of the civil disorders that left dozens dead, hundreds injured, and millions of dollars in damages. Among his remarks to the commission, the President included as a specific charge, "What effect do the mass media have on the riots?"

In its report eight months later, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (the Kerner Commission) offered three general responses to this charge. The first two dealt with the actual coverage of the preceding summer's civil disorders. The third finding, which the commission labeled "ultimately most important," was, ". . . the media have thus far failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems of race relations."

The commission said:

> By and large, news organizations have failed to communicate to both their black and white audiences a sense of the problems America faces and the sources of potential solutions. The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world. The ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, the Negro's burning sense of grievance are seldom conveyed. Slights and indignities are part of the Negro's daily life, and many of them come from what he now calls "the white press" – a press that repeatedly, if unconsciously, reflects the biases, the paternalism, the indifference of white America. This may be understandable, but it is not excusable in any institution that has the mission to inform and educate the whole of our society.

Such critiques of the media were not limited to those who studied the civil disorders of 1967. Ben Bagdikian, a longtime student of media performance, said in 1968:

> Until the recent past, Negroes appeared in the news most often because of crime . . . this news treatment of the Negro was more persistent and more pernicious than that of any other low income status group. . . . For the average white, Negroes did not go to school, earn scholarships, win election to the hierarchy of the Masons, attend PTA meetings, or die peaceful deaths after laudable or even uneventful lives. One wonders what the effects of this have been on white perception of the Negro, on the Negro's perception of himself, and on the news media's ability to hypnotize itself with its own information.

For their part the residents of ghettos saw the press as at one with the police and a general power structure they felt to be oppressive. While a senior editor at *Newsweek*, Edwin Diamond, remarked, "the white press all too often lined up with the police. That is to say, about the only time the white press reporters go into New York's Harlem, or Detroit's Twelfth Street, or Washington's U Street is behind a police car when there is trouble."

Commenting on white newsmen, a black reporter said to a *New York Times* editor, "The white moves in and out. The white sees a Negro leader at rallies when he gives speeches. The Negro sees him in church . . . at parties . . . at the grocery store . . . on the street. The Negro lives the ghetto life, day and night. The Negro doesn't have to do research to know what Stokely Carmichael is talking about."

Why were there almost no blacks in the media? There were men like the managing editor of a mass magazine who constantly professed a desire to hire a black writer but would always add, "I never met a coon who could write worth a stick." Those white editors who approached the task without bias, like Martin Hayden, editor-in-chief of the *Detroit News*, explained: "Everywhere the experience was – and it remains the same – Negroes were hired only when editors went out and looked for them, frequently lowering normal education and experience qualifica-

The problem of reaching Americans who will not read or look at anything about minorities depends upon the condition of the larger society, which the media shape only in part.

tions to hire them." As a result of the rankest kinds of discrimination plus all of the other disadvantages accruing from a system that limited their educational opportunity, the pool of blacks professionally able or motivated to enter journalism was very small. Only two all-black colleges offered journalism programs to their students. Dr. William Kearney of Hampton Institute said, "Journalism has been, for black people, a no-future occupation. They probably could see themselves as reporters for a black publication, but some of them had higher aspirations and there was no way to satisfy them."

Partly in response to the Kerner Commission findings, partly as an outgrowth of its earlier efforts to widen minority opportunities and improve race relations, the Ford Foundation in the late 1960s and early 1970s supported a series of activities designed to enhance the content and the sensitivity of the media in relation to minorities. The projects took three main directions:

1. Training of minority journalists.
2. Opening broadcasting to more and better coverage of minority affairs by means of advocacy in the administration and interpretation of broadcast law.
3. Supporting organizations committed to produce material about minorities and matters that concern them.

This report summarizes the experience.

Training and Employment

The journalistic profession has been shockingly backward in seeking out, hiring, training and promoting Negroes. Fewer than 5 per cent of the people employed by the news business in editorial jobs in the United States today are Negroes. Fewer than 1 per cent of editors and supervisors are Negroes, and most of them work for Negro-owned organizations.

– Kerner Commission

A TRADITION OF discrimination against nonwhites in the media had been heavily responsible for the absence of black and brown faces in city rooms and on television screens. In addition, the lament "can't find anyone qualified" had some justification. As Professor Kearney of Hampton pointed out, journalism was viewed by many nonwhites as a field closed to them. Prior to 1967 there was little attempt by white-dominated journalism schools to attract or subsidize nonwhites.

Academic Efforts

In 1968, officials of the Columbia University School of Journalism proposed a program of ten weeks of intensive training for nonwhites interested in a journalism career. The Ford Foundation supported the program in its initial year and by 1974 had made grants of some $1 million. In 1971, the CBS Foundation and the National Broadcasting Company began to contribute. Smaller sums from individual newspapers and broadcasters have brought the total invested to date to about $1.5 million. In 1972, the program became known as the Michele Clark Fellowships for Minority Journalists to honor a 1970 graduate who was killed in a plane crash while working for CBS.

From its inception, the program actively sought recruits across the nation. Letters to newspapers and broadcast stations informed them of the fellowships. Schools and community groups such as the Woodlawn Organization of Chicago, the New Detroit Committee, and the Puerto Rican Forum were asked to encourage candidates. Recruiters combed the inventory of the Urban League's Broadcast Skills Bank in search of individuals who had registered an interest in the media as a vocation.

Admission was competitive. In addition to submitting samples of their work, applicants were required to cover an assignment on a deadline and undergo a personal interview with a program administrator. In many cases, those accepted proved to be individuals with far less formal education than ordinarily found in a student at a professional school. The most extreme example was J. J. Gonzalez, who had dropped out of elementary school in the fourth grade. After completing the program, he joined WCBS-TV News in New York. Some Fellows formerly were letter carriers, school teachers, community action workers, secretaries, clerks, and messengers. None of them had ever held full-time positions in journalism and at most they worked in the fringe jobs of the media. The Fellows received a full tuition scholarship plus a salary sufficient to cover room and board and maintenance of a family if they had one. Every applicant was backed by a sponsoring newspaper or broadcast station, which, beginning in 1970, and with the exception of public television stations, committed itself to hire the student upon completion of the course. "The job guarantee is essential to the success of the program," said one of the instructors.

The curriculum, using both the academic staff of the Columbia Journalism School and guest lecturers from the media and public affairs, offered workshops on fundamentals of news coverage, news writing, principles of journalism, fairness, taste, judgment, and libel. Students were instructed in how to organize stories, check sources, and rewrite material. Outside experts, such as Tom Wicker of *The New York Times*, Walter Cronkite of CBS, columnist William Buckley, pollster Louis Harris, Georgia legislator Julian Bond, and June Shagaloff of the NAACP, offered insights into journalism's handling of contemporary affairs. Those Fellows headed for the print media published a paper called *Deadline* while broadcast enrollees aired their own nightly closed-circuit news show. Some of the material for these productions came from actual assignments given to cover news events breaking in New York.

Students in the ten-week program thus had an opportunity to combine academic instruction with practice of the journalist's craft. Instructors dealt with such individual problems as that of a Hispanic student who tended to employ only the present tense.

The Michele Clark program has graduated 225 individuals. About two-thirds of them entered broadcasting while the remainder went to work in the print media. Gloria Rojas, a 1968 graduate who had been a school teacher, became the first Hispanic employed by a New York television station when she joined WCBS-TV. Ex-doorman Henri Wittenberg, after a 1969 summer at Columbia, went to the staff of the *Detroit News*. Geraldo Rivera, a lawyer in the class of 1970, became nationally known for his work at ABC-TV in New York. And Anita Sims, a former secretary, followed her 1971 fellowship with a job as a reporter for the *Rochester Democrat Chronicle*.

The Ford Foundation concluded support for the program in 1974. The program, originally a crash effort, had demonstrated its value. Also, its per-student cost was unusually high – $12,000 for the eleven-week session, and by now undergraduate scholarship and journalism programs designed to attract minority candidates appeared to be supplying a large pool of qualified minority applicants for journalism schools. By 1971, for example, forty black colleges had added instruction in the media to their curriculums. The Foundation plans after 1974 to help finance a Michele Clark Scholarship Fund that would enable a number of candidates to attend journalism schools in the United States.

At Syracuse University, a 1969 program focused exclusively upon graduate fellowships for minority candidates in the Department of Television and Radio. The two-semester course led to an M.S. degree. Scholarships were budgeted at $4,500 plus $2,000 as the stipend for each student. Syracuse obtained $30,000 from the Ford Foundation which was to be matched by contributions from other sources. However, the university could only raise half the amount, all of it from the Allen Funt Foundation, and the program was cut to one year. Candidates needed a college degree, admission was competitive, and twelve minority individuals enrolled. Five graduates immediately entered the mass media. One woman became a public school teacher, and other Fellows pursued doctoral studies.

The Washington, D.C., Journalism Center, directed by Julius Duscha, a reporter of many years experience with the *Washington Post*, offered a somewhat different program to aspiring minority journalists. The center, founded in 1965, ordinarily provided fellowships that enabled working reporters from around the country to spend five months in the capital studying the workings of the Federal Government and how the press covers it. From 1969 through 1973, the center con-

ducted a program to "encourage and assist young blacks and members of other minority groups who aspire to careers in journalism." It was assisted by grants of about $300,000 from the Ford Foundation and contributions from other sources.

To recruit applicants, an official of the center visited a number of colleges, particularly those with predominantly black student bodies. In addition, the center asked civil rights and community action groups to refer potential candidates. Admission was competitive; fifty-two of 321 applicants were accepted. Almost all of the Fellows either held or expected to obtain college degrees.

The center organized seminars for the Fellows with federal officials, Congressmen, White House staff, diplomats, editors, and writers. Equally valuable were internships arranged with the Washington bureaus of *Time* magazine, the Knight Newspapers, National Public Radio, and Westinghouse Broadcasting. Material prepared by the apprentices was printed or broadcast by the news organizations. There was much less classroom instruction than at Columbia. The novices also benefited from close association with veteran journalists brought to the center under its regular programs.

The center actively sought jobs in the media for any graduates and in 1973 twenty-nine of the fifty-two participants were working as reporters or editors. For example, Jerome Mondesire, from the class of 1971, started at the *Baltimore Sun* and is now with the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Lucious New, Jr., after his 1970 fellowship, was hired by KDFW-TV in Dallas. Joseph Whittaker, a graduate of the 1969 session, joined the *Washington Post* and recently won the prized journalism award, a Nieman Fellowship.

On-the-Job

In contrast to the programs at Columbia, Syracuse, and the Washington Journalism Center, three other Foundation-assisted projects involved nonacademic organizations directly involved in the dissemination of news.

United Press International designed a program to recruit and train black newsmen. Selected UPI bureaus added about twenty fledgling reporters and photographers to be trained on the job. Each bureau found its own candidates and there was no formal competition to determine who was best qualified. A grant of $168,000 from the Ford Foundation went toward payment of salaries for the trainees and the executive director, a UPI employee.

The UPI program suffered from a series of miscalculations. "Remember, we're going to train them, not provide basic education," advised the director in a memorandum to the bureaus. But while the original stipulations restricted the program to college graduates, UPI editors reported serious deficiencies in basic skills, including spelling. Many of the trainees did not have a college education.

The most notable weakness in the UPI program was the absence of any formal instruction in news gathering. Regular UPI staffers were not given time off from their normal workload to devote to the trainees. As one UPI editor said, "Are we doing a disservice to our own reporters who find themselves in the position of educating and performing a job at the same time? Everyone thinks it's a great idea but there's little volunteer spirit, even among the liberals."

"Twice in seven months someone has actually trained me," complained a Chicago trainee. Another attributed the failure of the effort to the problems of running a news business. "The bureau chief is just too busy. I did a feature and he let it sit on his desk three months before it went out on the line." Several participants considered themselves exploited.

When the UPI program terminated after two years, five of the twenty trainees were

hired as permanent UPI staffers. An outside consultant hired by the Ford Foundation arranged for two others to get jobs elsewhere in the media. Three men decided to complete their journalism education in college.

A similar project involved the Afro-American newspapers, a chain of black-owned weekly newspapers with a national edition that is supplemented by local sections produced in Richmond, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and Newark. The students were called Frederick Douglass Fellows, and the Virginia Council on Human Relations administered the program initially. The Foundation granted $106,000 to cover staff salaries, stipends for the Fellows, and equipment such as typewriters. No prerequisites for education or vocational background were set. Among the initial fifteen Fellows were two former convicts, an unwed mother, and a house painter as well as four college graduates and several individuals with limited newspaper experience.

"Journalism has been, for black people, a no-future occupation. They probably could see themselves as reporters for a black publication, but some of them had higher aspirations and there was no way to satisfy them."

The program was troubled almost from the outset. The Frederick Douglass Fellows did receive some rudimentary schooling before being assigned to the on-the-job training in the offices of Afro-American newspapers. But just as in the UPI situation, regular news staff members were not given time away from their regular duties to teach the trainees. In addition, the Fellows leaned to "advocacy journalism," which did not fit the policies of the Afro-American papers. Under these strains, along with a bitter personality conflict between the white executive director and the students, the original concept of working through the Virginia Council on Human Relations and the Afro-American chain collapsed.

Most of the Frederick Douglass Fellows decided to shift their base of operations to New York and to work through William Worthy, the correspondent for the Afro-American papers who had served as the chief instructor. The Urban League in New York assumed the administrative role. The New York survivors received on-the-job training as unpaid stringers for the Community News Service, a source of information to the mass media on the nonwhite community (see page 20). When the Frederick Douglass Fellows program terminated in 1970, three of the students found posts in journalism.

Veteran Washington, D.C., newsman Robert G. Spivack started another program to train minority newsmen. It was run in conjunction with the Reporter News Syndicate, a press service which he headed. The New York Urban Coalition recruited and selected the trainees. Spivack rented space for classrooms and arranged for students to attend seminars and lectures given by prominent politicians and newsmen. The apprentices received news assignments, some of which Spivack used as part of the Reporter News Syndicate service. He also mailed copies of the students' work to prospective employers. His death in 1970, about one year after the program started, cut short what was essentially a one-man operation.

Related Programs

Project Able in the San Francisco Bay area focused upon training minorities in technical skills associated with journalism, teaching photography, videotaping, and filmmaking. The Rosenberg Foundation had provided money to establish the project, and it was enabled to expand through funds from the

Ford Foundation and the San Francisco Equal Opportunity Council and office space donated by the city redevelopment agency. Over a two-year period, thirty-one men and women drawn from the pool of hard-core unemployed received instruction through Project Able.

The originators of the project had planned to both train individuals and establish self-supporting services. The executive director

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obtained several contracts with some private businesses and community groups, and the still photography department of Project Able began to pay its own way. The staff made intensive efforts to widen the services to include minority-oriented films on planned parenthood, recruitment for the Peace Corps, and vocational training. However, the diversified effort drained both energy and resources from the project. It became increasingly difficult to maintain both the training programs and turn out quality products for clients. An evaluation summed up the project's fatal weakness: "It is trying to move in too many directions at once." When the grants had been expended, Project Able shut down operations.

Clark College in Atlanta took a different approach to increasing the number of qualified nonwhites for the mass media. Student newspapers often serve as an introduction to journalism. But at many black universities student newspapers have been poorly done, unresponsive to campus interests, published intermittently, and hampered by censorship. Clark, a member institution of the predominantly black Atlanta University Center, began in 1968 an effort to improve the condition of student newspapers at black colleges.

With the aid of a $126,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, some forty colleges participated. The basic technique was for the editor and staff of the campus paper to meet with professional newspapermen working on nearby metropolitan dailies. Also, regional meetings brought the college editors together to exchange ideas.

Consultation between the black student newspapermen and the white professional journalists got off to a slow start, but the barriers broke down and enthusiasm on both sides of the table mounted. As a result the student newspapers appeared more regularly and their writing and editing improved. At Kentucky State College, where no paper appeared following campus disorders in 1968, three issues of a student newspaper were published the following year. At Jackson State College the combined team of campus editors and a professional newsman convinced the authorities to end their censorship of the paper. In several instances, funds were used to keep a student paper going until it attracted enough readership to support it.

The Foundation granted additional funds to Clark College for two summer workshops for fifty-five black undergraduates interested in journalism careers.

The successful journalism training programs funded by the Ford Foundation had several common features. They were operated by established institutions that offered organized, structured training in the profession as well as on-the-job experience. Selection of students was highly competitive and in the main those accepted came with strong educational backgrounds.

In programs where an institutional structure was missing or where the students lacked higher education, the few individuals who managed to become journalists in spite of the handicaps were highly motivated people able to make the most of even a small opportunity.

Using Broadcast Law

AS EARLY AS 1955, black citizens of Jackson, Mississippi, had complained to the Federal Communications Commission about the behavior of television station WLBT-TV in Jackson. The residents protested that WLBT-TV failed to provide all viewpoints on such controversial issues as civil rights laws and integration of schools and other public facilities. After several years, and in the face of FCC pressure, WLBT-TV promised that it would air a fair balance of opinion. But local blacks from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and nearby Tougaloo College did not observe any significant change in the station's treatment of controversial material, particularly racial matters. Again allegations of bias were presented, but the FCC rejected the charges and permitted the operators of WLBT-TV to renew their broadcast license.

An example of the failure of Jackson's media to cover minority life was demonstrated after the mayor declared his city had no slums. A group of blacks took him on a tour of their part of town, where he saw dilapidated housing, trash-strewn lots, and outdoor privies three blocks from the state capitol. Subsequently, the mayor remarked, "I've seen things today I wouldn't have believed existed in the city of Jackson." His lack of knowledge was partly traceable to the persistent absence of media attention to the worst parts of town.

In 1964 a petition to deny renewal of WLBT-TV's license was filed with the FCC by the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ and several Jackson citizens. As a result of the evidence they submitted of discriminatory practices, the FCC renewed the license for only one year instead of the customary three. However, the FCC refused to grant the petitioners official standing, which would have permitted them to argue the issue before the Commission and the courts.

The struggle therefore shifted to the courts and in 1966 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled in favor of the petitioners. The FCC was ordered to hold a hearing concerning the license renewal of WLBT-TV and to allow the petitioners to participate. The landmark decision established the precedent of citizen standing in questions of license renewal.

The Office of Communication had been created in 1954 by the United Church of Christ "to realize the ethical values of the church through a ministry in mass communications." In 1968, the Office of Communication obtained a grant from the Ford Foundation for a campaign to combat racial discrimination in broadcasting in twelve Southern cities. In the following year, the Office of Communication spread its efforts to stations across the country and included activities to promote greater employment of minorities at the programming and managerial levels. Field representatives taught local citizens how to marshal grievances, monitor programming, and approach and negotiate with management. The Office of Communication published a guide, *How to Protect Citizen Rights in Television and Radio*, and *A Guide to Understanding Broadcast License Applications*.

Also active in combating discrimination in broadcasting is the Citizens Communications Center, a public interest law firm in

Washington, D.C., that is supported by the Ford Foundation and other philanthropic sources. Although both organizations retain totally separate identities, Citizens Communications Center has cooperated with the Office of Communication from time to time in working to make the FCC and the industry it is designed to regulate more accountable to the public and more representative of minorities. Citizens Communications Center acts as legal counsel for the Office of Communication and other groups, drawing up petitions to challenge license renewals. It has also forged the machinery to enforce and monitor agreements and develop provisions for arbitration and penalties.

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License Challenges

The basis for the efforts of both of these groups has been the statutory structure regulating broadcasting, and in particular the rules of the Federal Communications Commission. In return for the license granted by the FCC, owners of a station must meet a series of requirements. Their responsibilities in regard to representation of minority people and their concerns rest upon the FCC statement, "The broadcaster is obligated to make a positive, diligent and continuing effort, in good faith, to determine the tastes, needs, and desires of the public in his community and to provide programming to meet these needs and interests." Applicants for license renewals are also required to submit a description of community services performed by the station and an explanation of its methods of "ascertainment" – how the community was surveyed and the programs the station proposed to create in order to cover local problems discovered in its survey.

Neither broadcasters nor the FCC paid much attention to the requirements until the WLBT-TV case. Chief Justice Warren Burger, then sitting on the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., put the FCC and the broadcasters on notice with his 1966 WLBT-TV opinion. In establishing the vital precedent of citizen standing in questions of license renewal, he wrote, "After nearly five decades of operation, the broadcast industry does not seem to have grasped the simple fact that a broadcast license is a public trust subject to termination for breach of duty."

The next major development in the WLBT-TV case came in 1969, when the Court of Appeals, in an unprecedented decision, ordered the FCC to vacate the station's license. An integrated nonprofit corporation, Communications Improvement Inc., whose earnings go to educational causes in Mississippi, was named interim operator. It was the first to hire a black television station manager. Shifts in programming changed WLBT-TV into an outlet with a better balance of material. For example, when "Soul" and "Black Journal," two national minority-oriented shows, were shown widely in the rest of the country but were rejected by Mississippi's public television system, they appeared on WLBT-TV. Profits from the temporary license were channeled to a Tougaloo College training course in communications. Black employment at WLBT-TV during the tem-

Cameras either turned away from black leaders or else they were hidden "by systematically placing white persons in front of them or pushing them aside."

porary stewardship has risen from 17 per cent to 38 per cent. And at competing stations, WAPT and WJTV in Jackson, the example of WLBT-TV's fate did not pass unnoticed. More blacks went on the payrolls of these stations, and newscasts carried stories about nonwhites and civil rights affairs.

Communications Improvement Inc. remains the interim licensee of the station, but an FCC administrative law judge has issued an initial decision awarding the permanent license to a group of Mississippians with the smallest black membership among those groups that had applied. This decision is being appealed by the Office of Communication.

The Office of Communication and local groups have also addressed the phenomenon of white-owned, black-oriented radio stations that produced so-called ghetto programming – soul music, jive talk, rip-and-read news (verbatim material taken from the wire services with no independent or local reporting). These kinds of operations usually avoided local news coverage and controversial public issues. They also featured as advertisers finance companies that exploited borrowers and stores that habitually took advantage of ill-informed consumers.

Two campaigns concerned with stations of this kind were waged against WOIC in Columbia, South Carolina and WTMP in Tampa, Florida. WOIC in particular had been found to have made no serious attempt to ascertain community needs and attitudes. It relied upon a commercial investors' demographic study and on a questionnaire that went to only fifty-eight people out of 20,000 residents of the area; of the fifty-eight, six were black. Four years after Columbia Citizens Concerned with Improved Broadcasting filed its first petition with the FCC, the management agreed to transfer the license to a new corporation owned by blacks who pledged themselves to render service in the public interest.

Payment for Redress

A second signal court decision involved the Office of Communication and KTAL-TV in Texarkana, Texas, in 1968. A petition against license renewal for KTAL-TV argued that the station, serving a local population of 100,000 that was 39 per cent black, "deliberately refused to cover local events which would be distasteful to the white majority."

"This is legitimizing the payment of blackmail," complained the industry's magazine. But the precedent stood up. It was now financially as well as legally possible to take issue with the proprietors of stations

Even at public functions, film on KTAL-TV showed few black faces. Cameras either turned away from black leaders or else they were hidden "by systematically placing white persons in front of them or pushing them aside." Sports events at black schools received no coverage, and minority children were excluded from the station's "Laugh-A-Lot-Club" program. No public service announcements for minorities came over the air.

A 189-page bill of particulars impressed the KTAL-TV management sufficiently to enter into direct negotiations with black community representatives. The station committed itself to hire blacks, to treat various sides of controversial issues, to provide public service announcements on the activities of black organizations, to make no unnecessary references to race, particularly in connection with crimes, and to consult continuously with all of its constituency.

However, the confrontation with KTAL-TV had cost the local citizens group a good deal of money. Depositions and monitoring procedures required substantial outlays. The Office of Communication brought a suit for

The decision marked the first time the FCC denied renewal on the basis of citizens complaints.

reimbursement of expenses, and Citizens Communications Center was engaged as counsel. The U.S. Court of Appeals sustained a request for the payment of expenses of the local group in its effort to reform KTAL-TV. "This is legitimizing the payment of blackmail," complained the industry's *Broadcasting* magazine. But the precedent stood up. It was now financially as well as legally possible to take issue with the proprietors of broadcast stations.

More recently, in the fall of 1974, the FCC, acting on a complaint brought by the Citizens Communications Center on behalf of three Alabama citizens, voted not to renew the license for the agency that runs the eight-station Alabama public television network. The decision marked the first time the FCC denied renewal on the basis of citizens complaints. The citizens had complained that the public television stations hired virtually no black employees and failed to televise programs designed for black adults. Once the decision takes effect, any group in Alabama that wants to operate one or more of the stations will be able to apply for the license. The original operating agency may also reapply, and if it provides the FCC with adequate plans for the hiring of and programming for blacks, according to a spokesman for the Citizens Communications Center, the FCC might justifiably award it the license.

Negotiation

The court victories in the WLBT-TV and KTAL-TV cases convinced broadcasters that they could not flatly reject the requests for better minority representation. Both the Office of Communication and the Citizens Communications Center also considered the courtroom a last and costly resort. The Rev. Everett C. Parker, director of the Office of Communication, said, "The technique of face-to-face discussion and negotiation between citizen groups and station management has turned out to be far more fruitful than that of bringing stations to formal hearings before the FCC."

As a result a pattern for the redress of grievances developed. In city after city, as the time for renewal of broadcast licenses approached, local people, advised and aided by the Office of Communication or the Citizens Communications Center, confronted radio and television management with their objections to programming and practices. Negotiations for changes followed, and the result was usually a compromise settlement. Agreements to improve minority representation, to balance coverage of controversial subjects, and to hire and train more nonwhites were arrived at in Youngstown, Dallas, Atlanta, Memphis, Shreveport, Syracuse, and Kern County, California, among others.

The issues have varied. In Rosebud, South Dakota, the Office of Communication worked to improve television service to American Indians from stations in Sioux Falls and Reliance. In Gary, Indiana, the problem was telephone interview shows. The Gary Human Relations Commission charged that the station permitted personal attacks on individuals (often members of civil rights groups) with no opportunity for people to reply. As a result of the intervention by the Commission, aided by the Office of Communication, the station agreed to retain tapes of any calls. This enabled those who were attacked to demand, under FCC rules, free time for rebuttal.

Employment Analysis

Early in 1972, the Office of Communication conducted a study of employment practices at eleven Massachusetts television stations.

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The study relied upon the employment reports filed by the stations under FCC requirements. Analysis of the figures showed a significant imbalance in the employment of both minorities and women.

On the basis of these findings, the FCC was asked to inquire into the possibilities of discrimination and asked to delay license renewals until the stations proved their good faith in equal employment, as stipulated under FCC rules. While the complaint filed by the Office of Communication failed to halt the license renewals, at least one station, WBZ-TV in Boston, showed enough improvement in its employment practices to be dropped from the list of those accused of discrimination. The FCC eventually issued orders to three stations to upgrade women in the employment hierarchy and the Office of Communication believes that its analysis

One of the early agreements to combat discrimination in the media was reached by the Dallas/Fort Worth Coalition for a Free Flow of Information, with the aid of the United Church of Christ, and the management of KDFW-TV in Dallas. The station committed itself to train and employ minorities and to cover minority news and issues.

and its action has influenced the FCC to take employment data into consideration before it grants renewals. Since 1972, the Office of Communication has conducted an annual survey of the employment status of minorities and women in the television industry.

The Office of Communication and the Citizens Communications Center used broadcast law to open a new issue that affected minority representation when they protested the sale of five stations owned by Time Inc. to McGraw-Hill. Chicano groups in Grand Rapids, Denver, San Diego, Bakersfield, and Indianapolis filed a petition with the FCC opposing the sale on the ground that it violated the Commission's policy that bars ownership of more than three VHF stations in the top fifty television markets. To ignore the FCC's own policy, said the petitions, would perpetuate monopoly ownership of television licenses. In addition, it was argued that the proposed programming and employment policies of McGraw-Hill failed to serve the interests of minorities and the public generally. The case was significant because some students of broadcasting believe that only with wider dispersion of ownership will there be true minority representation in the media.

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Following months of negotiations, the parties involved hammered out an agreement. In return for the right to purchase the stations, McGraw-Hill committed itself to improve local service to minorities. It created local committees to advise management on the feelings and concerns of minority viewers. These councils advise the stations on planning and production of programs that serve minority interests and on recruiting and training of minorities for jobs at the stations. Equally important, McGraw-Hill accepted the principle of a limitation on the number of stations it could buy. The company took over only four of the five outlets (three VHF and one UHF), leaving Grand Rapids in the hands of Time Inc. The pact set an important precedent for the disposition of broadcast stations in blocs by multi-station owners.

As of the summer of 1974, local groups and the two national communications organizations have cases pending against holders of station licenses in Detroit; Albuquerque; Bakersfield, California; Cairo, Illinois; and Syracuse. The FCC now grants membership on its committees and advisory councils to attorneys from the Citizens Communications Center, and both the Office of Communication and the center have continued to negotiate with the FCC to improve the capacity of private citizens to participate in proceedings that involve license shifts or renewals.

Several newly organized groups, including the national Black Media Coalition and the National Latino Media Coalition, may assume part of the role of coordinating actions by local groups in several areas with common grievances. But the two older media advisory organizations expect to continue to work with grass roots movements as well as do long range analysis of the media and provide leadership for dealing with the broadcast industry and the FCC.*

*With minority capital in short supply and investment costs in standard broadcast facilities high, even when a channel is available, one alternative for greater minority access to the air lies in cable television. In 1971, Howard University, with a $20,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, held a workshop for elected and public officials from the ranks of the disadvantaged. The conference covered such matters as the costs to build a cable system, staffing, access, and billing of users. To date, cable television remains an undeveloped possibility. Meanwhile, Citizens Communications Center has entered the field of cable regulation because it believes that the field ought not to follow the monopolistic pattern that has marked broadcasting until now.

Media Content

Historian and *Ebony* editor Lerone Bennett said, ". . . white-oriented media are part of the race problem. They reflect the interests, values, and aspirations of white people. . . . We face the need for white-oriented media to transcend the limitations of whiteness."

In addition to making grants to organizations that operated programs to train minorities for the media or used the law to gain access to the media, the Foundation has assisted projects and institutions that directly produce and make available to majority-oriented media material that deals with the minority experience.*

Projects in Print

Well before the urban riots of 1967, the Southern Education Reporting Service had been producing materials that aimed at enhancing racial coverage of established media. Established in 1954, the SERS published in tabloid-size newspaper form accounts of developments in education that stemmed from the historic 1954 Supreme Court decision on school desegregation. Because the staff consisted of professional journalists from such newspapers as the *Washington Post*, *Arkansas Gazette*, *Montgomery Advertiser*, *Wilmington News* (Delaware), *Miami Herald*, and the *Macon News* (Georgia), the SERS reports were accepted by the national press as accurate.

In 1969, the SERS† changed its focus and was renamed, becoming the Race Relations Information Center. (Some of SERS's original data-gathering functions were assumed by the federal government, which in 1965 began to survey the rate of desegregation on a district-by-district basis.) Operating out of Nashville, the RRIC published a twice monthly newsletter, the *Race Relations Reporter*. The goal was to produce accurate information on race relations that would serve as both a source for the news media on nationally important developments in race relations and as a supplement to news media coverage where civil rights affairs received insufficient attention. Like its predecessors, the *Race Relations Reporter* was a professional news operation and therefore enjoyed credibility among editors and broadcasters.

In addition to the regular newsletter, the RRIC served clients with in-depth special reports, including, for example, a thirty-nine page study on the displacement of black teachers in eleven southern states.

Free to all subscribers, the *Race Relations Reporter* went first-class mail to all newspapers with a circulation of 10,000 or more, all black papers, the editors of news magazines, news directors of black oriented radio, national wire services, radio and television networks, black public officials and professionally involved individuals. The mailing list reached 65,000. The Race Relations Informa-

* Ford Foundation support to minority organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban League, and others may be said to have indirectly contributed to representation of minority affairs in the media since many of these groups pressed the communications world for more coverage and sensitivity on minority matters.

† Another pre-Kerner Commission project was a newspaper, *The Southern Courier*. Started by a group of white Harvard alumni in 1965, the paper carried questions and answers on civil rights rulings along with accounts of incidents in the movement. It also listed opportunities for employment and job training: The Ford Foundation granted $125,000 to keep *The Southern Courier* going, but it ceased publication in 1968.

tion Center itself maintained a library and catalog of contemporary material on social, economic, and political activities of racial minorities in the U.S. For radio stations, the center operated an audio feed service, tape recorded messages that summarized new developments in race relations. Tapes were changed twice a month. Black-oriented broadcasters picked up this material by simply dialing a special telephone number. Lack of funds has forced the audio feed service to be suspended since 1972. The center helped compile a Directory of Afro-American Resources, published by R. R. Bowker Co., and members of the staff criss-crossed the U.S. as consultants and speakers at community meetings and universities.

The Ford Foundation, which had earlier supported SERS, beginning in 1969 granted the RRIC $556,000. When the grants terminated in 1973, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation provided funds to keep the RRIC in business.

Sensitizing a Media Capital

Up North, even in supposedly enlightened New York, news coverage of minorities did not escape such criticism as the Kerner Commission's. In an attempt to establish a dialogue between the mass media in the city and black and Spanish-speaking residents, the New School established an Urban Reporting Project – a series of workshops in which editors met with representatives of minority groups to discuss coverage of the nonwhite community.

Through these sessions, conducted under a grant from the Foundation, the whites developed some news contacts within the ghetto areas. Feedback was almost immediate. Items about minority matters appeared on the widely watched six o'clock television news shows and in the newspapers. The pool of spokesmen for the nonwhites grew. However, there still remained a need for continuous

race relations
REPORTER
Three Integrated Exceptions
Neighborhoods Seek Racial Stability
Economic Summit
Black Leaders Hit "Distorted Theories"
Blacks, Latins, Asians
LA's Minority Policemen Express Their Concerns
Draft Charge
Indian Editor Convicted
Minorities and Watergate

flow of information from the minority community.

Out of the Urban Reporting Project, therefore, evolved the Community News Service, an agency that provides the mass media a steady supply of items about the nonwhite community and its concerns. The mission of CNS is to increase the sensitivity and completeness with which established news media report on the concerns of minority communities in the New York area, and by example in the nation as a whole.

The CNS staff has always drawn from a mixed bag of talent. Some of the reporters have been untrained, unschooled neighborhood people with an ambition to work in journalism; others came with a college education or a journalism background. Few who have worked at CNS began there as fully trained and experienced newspeople. But over the years, many CNS staffers have developed

sufficient skills to move on to *The New York Times*, the *New York Post*, and the *Chicago Sun Times*.

In addition to covering minority affairs in New York, CNS has had a reporter in Washington and a correspondent at the United Nations. It also reports on local high school sports, a field heavily peopled with nonwhites and largely uncovered by the metropolitan press. Emile Milne, formerly a reporter at the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *New York Post*, currently serves as executive editor. Along with grants from the Ford Foundation and contributions from other philanthropies and private industry, CNS derives slightly more than half its revenues from subscribers including *The New York Times*, the *Daily News*, WCBS-TV, WNBC-TV, *Newsweek*, WNET/13, the *New York Age*, and *El Tiempo*, among others. Subscribers are assessed on a sliding scale of from $10 a week to $100, largely based upon circulation and amount of service.

In the early days of CNS, even the larger clients in the media occasionally used some of the material verbatim, if not always with credit to the source. As the big newspapers and broadcasters developed more of their own staff equipped to cover ghetto life with some sophistication and understanding, the files from CNS have served clients generally as background or as a means to alert them to a situation. Messengers carry the files to subscribers. For some of the smaller publishers, newspapers which have heavy neighborhood readership, CNS serves a more visible function. As one subscriber put it, "CNS gives us the equivalent of an extra reporter, something we otherwise could not afford."

A typical CNS daily file of seven items covered a strike at a public school, a community group's fight for the rights of a dispossessed family, the coming termination of several Office of Economic Opportunity units, a feature on future plans of two black TV producers, the struggle within a church convention over the power of a Spanish-speaking group, campaigns by Operation Breadbasket and the United Farm Workers, and a Manhattan school district's new bilingual program.

Larger elements of the media, as well as the smaller ones, find CNS useful. *New York Times* Metropolitan Editor Arthur Gelb wrote, "Editors and reporters on the metropolitan staff have found the CNS to be an extremely valuable source of information – often tipping us off to stories on the black and Spanish-speaking community that either we are unaware of or unable to devote the manpower to pursuing."

"White-oriented media are part of the race problem. They reflect the interests, values, and aspirations of white people. . . . We face the need for the media to transcend the limitations of whiteness."

New York Daily News Metropolitan Editor Jack Smee wrote, "The service has given evidence of steady improvement in the quality of work and more recently of quantity. While the *News* has often covered the same stories offered by CNS, just as often CNS has come up with reports of events or situations on which we had no prior knowledge. Such material has proven very useful to us in developing our own stories."

Typical entries in the CNS day book of events in the minority community are a conference on early childhood services, a health carnival in the Bronx, a luncheon of black civil service workers, an anti-drug rally, a conference on the use of school pupil records, a gala in celebration of West African culture.

For all of their enthusiasm for the service, the subscribers do not pay enough to support CNS. With the Foundation's last grant scheduled to terminate in 1975, the agency has

Up North, even in supposedly enlightened New York, news coverage of minorities did not escape such criticism as the Kerner Commission's.

sought to build revenues by auxiliary publishing operations. CNS created a well-regarded manual on drug abuse, but was unsuccessful in its attempt to market it in the New York schools. Emile Milne would like to expand his list of subscribers outside of New York, starting on a nearby regional basis and then widening until perhaps CNS might become a resource for journalists across the country. To make it more valuable, however, CNS may have to make a heavy investment to establish itself as a wire service, rather than an agency that depends upon messengers.

The Book World

A volunteer committee of writers, illustrators, teachers, librarians, and editors in 1965 formed the Council on Interracial Books for Children to promote fair and authentic representation of the lives of minority groups in children's books and the trade press. The Ford Foundation made a grant of $40,000 to the Council in 1971 to support contests to discover new authors, give advances to promising talent, move manuscripts to publishers, organize workshops for editors and minority writers, and to publish a bulletin.

The 1968 contest winner for a children's book, *Where Does The Day Go*, was a black postal worker, Walter Myers. After the story of his experience was published by *Parents Magazine*, Myers accepted a job as a senior trade editor at Bobbs-Merrill. The winner in 1972, with *Jimmy Yellow Hawk*, was Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve. Her book was the first published piece of children's fiction written by an American Indian.

In the beginning, the bulletin of the Council on Interracial Books for Children went free to editors, librarians, and other interested persons. By 1972, the bulletin had converted to a paid circulation of 3,000 subscribers; a campaign is under way to increase the number to 20,000 by 1975.

A Foundation loan of $250,000 was made to The Third Press, the only substantial minority-owned trade book publisher in the U.S., established in 1971. A thirty-three-year-old Nigerian-born writer, Joseph Okpaku, became the editor and in less than four years the firm published fifty-two titles by American, African, and European authors. Among the works were a pair of novels, *The Polygamist*, by N. Sithole, and *The Trail of Christopher Okigbo*, by A. Mazrui, both set in Africa. *The Guinea Pigs*, by L. Yawlik, was called by the *London Times*, "the best work of fiction out of Eastern Europe since World War II," and *The New York Times* rated the Third Press's *Third World Voices for Children* "outstanding." The Third Press scored something of a coup by signing Jerald terHorst to do a biography of Gerald Ford before he became President and terHorst did his brief service as Presidential press secretary.

Problems endemic to the book publishing business and in particular to a new company have made the going difficult for The Third Press. Originally, a larger publisher agreed to distribute Third Press books but the outside firm did not have enough at stake to vigorously push Third Press items, and the company was forced to assume the costly operation of distribution itself. Third Press also accepted as part of its responsibility to the nonwhite community the necessity to produce worthy but not immediately profitable books. While these have a strong backlist potential, they add to the financial problems. Reviews of Third Press books indicate that the company is an editorial success, but its future as an independent producer is uncertain because of its money troubles.

Public Broadcasting and Minorities

News Coverage

In 1967, the Ford Foundation launched a series of grants to public television stations to demonstrate what they were capable of doing if given both freedom and realistic budgets. Included in the wide variety of proposals submitted were several that provided added and more sensitive coverage of minority people.

A richer diet of minority content was provided, for example, by a series of local shows known generically as "newsrooms." Units created in Dallas, Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, New York, Jacksonville, and Washington, D.C., covered local events and situations in depth, with heavy emphasis on on-scene visual materials and interviews. The very nature of the reportage meant that a great deal more time was devoted to areas that most concern minorities – housing, welfare, public health facilities, crime, and unemployment.

The newsroom shows generally have been well received, largely because the journalists, white and minority, are professionals. A somewhat similar Foundation-assisted attempt, the Storefront Studio at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, foundered largely because the reporters lacked experience and training. The Storefront Studio had been designed to involve the poor in the production of a news show and the staff was drawn from the hard-core unemployed. Inadequately trained, their delivery often vague or rambling, the new recruits to journalism leaned to advocacy reporting and became embroiled in charges of distortion of the news. The Storefront Studio was shut down after less than four months on the air in 1970.

Direct Service

A number of public television programs provide direct services to minority viewers. The Job Man Caravan, put on by South Carolina's Educational Television Commission, seeks to reach the unemployed and the underemployed through a statewide network of public television stations. The Ford Foundation granted $186,000 to support the concept. The program appeals to but is not confined to minority interests, providing information on jobs – what they pay and the education and skills required.

Businessmen and professionals talk about their specialties during question-and-answer sessions with young people. Viewers receive tips on what to wear, how to dress, and how to respond during job interviews. Experts advise the audience about living conditions and the employment market if they expect to migrate to urban centers in the state or even up North. Mixed in with the service features is a sprinkling of entertainment through specifically filmed segments with soul music stars such as James Brown, Lou Rawls, and the Platters.

The Job Man Caravan was an instant success. After the first show, 491 people telephoned a toll-free number in pursuit of further information about jobs that had been described. Over the first year's forty-two programs, 2,559 individuals had contacted the stations in search of jobs. Commented one viewer, "It helps us understand that we should

house," which brought black and white students together for rap sessions, ran into difficulties because of the profanity of participants and ideas that were considered too radical. The fourth show, "My New Orleans," personalized tours of the city, did not generate interest. An official of the local public television station said of the failures, "The kind of television to which the station committed itself in the last year involved 'racial mixing' at many levels and New Orleans was not ready for it."

Jacksonville's Community Television produced "Feedback," an open telephone line operation through which private citizens question guests representing various sides of local issues, such as school desegregation and busing plans, the possible impact of proposed superhighways, racial discrimination in the walk with our heads up just like the other man because we are just human." Remarked another, "It gave me confidence to go for a job." After the Ford Foundation grant had been expended, the Job Man Caravan succeeded in attracting local financing, and the program is still operating.

Racial Dialogue

There have been failures as well as successes in airing minority concerns. The Greater New Orleans Educational Television Foundation received a $125,000 grant for a series of programs that would "reflect the feeling of the Negro community of New Orleans" – admittedly an attempt to bring together whites and blacks amid growing talk of separatism. Four different shows were tried. "Neighborhood" attempted to cover schools, track meets, jazz clubs, and other activities in the black community. Reaction to "Neighborhood" was nil; not a single letter was written to the station about it. "Equaltime," designed to examine controversial subjects, collapsed when spokesmen for what was considered the local "establishment" declined to appear. "Coffee-Jacksonville post office, and a variety of pending bills in the legislature. Before the telephone interrogations, a pair of hosts or staff reporters conduct a brief interview with the guests. On the air five nights a week, live, "Feedback" offers a forum for some, entertainment for others, and information for all. The show was created to stimulate greater community involvement in issues that affected people in the viewing area. By its nature it has opened up discussion of matters that concern nonwhite residents. An audience survey found that the black community felt "Feedback" provides a valuable service, and the entire county has shown a consistent 10 per cent higher voter turnout than any Florida counterpart since the advent of the show. "Feedback" is still going, financed by local sources.

Drama as a Vehicle

At public television station KCET in Los Angeles a major effort was intended for the Chicano population. Because there was a long Mexican literary tradition of the *novella*, the continuing story, the vehicle of the soap opera seemed appropriate. "Canción de la Raza" (Song of the People) took the Ramos family through sixty-five episodes in the East Los Angeles barrio. "Canción" dealt with birth, death, police mistreatment, job training, the grape workers' strike, the place of religion in contemporary Los Angeles, the welfare system, the importance of education, the awareness of both individual and group problems. Dramas centered on the conflict of a trucker whose employer asked him to haul nonunion grapes, a character illegally in the U.S. faced with deportation, and a lawyer who demanded an exorbitant fee.

To produce "Canción de la Raza," KCET enlisted researchers, writers, actors, and technicians from the Mexican American community. KCET also organized an actors' workshop in order to enlarge the pool of

talent for the dramas. As an adjunct, "Linea Abierta" (Open Line) took telephone calls from viewers who discovered in "Canción de la Raza" situations parallel to their own and for which they sought some solutions. "Linea Abierta" served as a referral service. Panel discussions on KCET chewed over the problems of the Ramos family and the reality of the answers that they sought. A community study indicated that the program reached the targeted audience, blue-collar families with incomes of $4,000 to $5,000 whose educational background fell below average. Interviewers also found that watchers took the lessons of "Canción" to heart. As a result of the program, many applied for services which heretofore they did not know existed. Others participated in community action programs for the first time.

The panel credited public television with paying more consistent attention to minority concerns [but] criticized the quantity and quality of materials produced.

Such comments came from the audience as: "It makes me proud of being a Mexican American. It made me more aware of being helpful to other Mexican Americans." "It taught me to consider things relating to my family outside the home." "I found out about organizations that can help, like if you quit school." "My kids say Mexicans have less advantages than whites. I showed them on the program how they have all kinds of advantages, but you have to know how to get them."

In the footsteps of "Canción" came "Ahora," a magazine-style show that featured Teacher Corps interviews, bilingual schools, Chicanos studying law, and other matters of interest to the Mexican American community. While "Ahora" enjoyed some success in explaining events such as a Los Angeles school district's program for teacher-parent conferences, it never captured the popularity of "Canción" and lapsed after 165 programs.

Initially, it had been hoped that public television stations around the country which had a Spanish-speaking audience potential would find "Canción" worth showing. The Los Angeles program, however, did not appeal to the largely Puerto Rican Hispanic community in New York. The problems that faced Mexican Americans in East Los Angeles differed from those in Tucson, Arizona, where even the Spanish was a different dialect. Instead of using "Canción," KUAT-TV in Tucson, with a Ford Foundation grant, turned out twenty-six half hour programs that included news and entertainment, all in Spanish. The Southwest Texas Educational Television Council, another grant recipient, developed "Periódico," weekly looks at various aspects of the Spanish-speaking population around Austin. Using the facilities of KLRN, "Periódico" dealt with a school boycott organized over the question of bilingual instruction, proper diets, and testimony on civil rights hearings held in Austin.

Reaching out to black Americans, the Chicago Educational Television Association (WTTW) in 1969, with a $600,000 grant, used the soap opera form to present the life of a family in the Chicago ghetto. The story line followed from the diary of a black policeman who had been killed during a riot. Episodes involved police use of force, corruption in narcotics cases, racial conflicts in high school, and exploitation of a black veteran by a used car dealer. Titled "Bird of the Iron Feather," a reference to blacks as fettered birds, the series was moved from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. as a consequence of its insistence upon retaining street language and dealing in subject matter considered unsuitable for younger viewers.

"Bird of the Iron Feather" employed local people; often they learned the trade of acting on the job. The show became the highest

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Actors, as well as researchers, writers, and technical staff, were recruited from the Mexican American community in Los Angeles for KCET-TV's dramatic series "Canción de la Raza." Warmup exercises were part of the daily training they received in an acting workshop run by the station.

rated one in the history of WTTW. Not only did it draw fan mail from the black community but critics from such publications as *Time* and the *Wall Street Journal* acclaimed the show. A few listeners protested the contents and the angry words of characters, but when the money ran out after twenty-one shows, the black community urged that it be continued. No financial support could be found, although "Bird of the Iron Feather," through a small additional grant from the Ford Foundation, was distributed to some public television outlets beyond Chicago.

At WGBH in Boston, after consultation with an advisory group in the black community, the station decided to produce twenty one-hour long original dramas under the title, "On Being Black." The Ford Foundation granted $750,000 for the project, which expected to feature new and established black writers, black actors, and black crews.

A national talent search failed to turn up a black producer who had been fully responsible for producing a dramatic series. Much time was lost before WGBH finally found a man who seemed to have the potential to handle the operation. Because of the delays, the original proposal of twenty shows had to be cut to fifteen. "On Being Black" was also hampered by a shortage of black authors with both talent and a knowledge of how to write for television. Productions were handicapped by the lack of trained black technicians. Alerted early to the absence of black

directors, WGBH secured a grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to train black directors on the job. By the time all the dramas were finished, several individuals completed this course.

In spite of all of its problems, "On Being Black" did put on the air original works by such talented writers as Alice Childress, J. E. Franklin, and Clayton Riley. Black actors William Marshall, Lou Gossett, Al Freeman, Jr., and others who had already won recognition on Broadway or in films enthusiastically participated in productions at WGBH. Dick Gregory and Moms Mabley brightened up an hour devoted to the humor of blacks, and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre provided another notable segment.

WGBH felt encouraged enough to plan a second year of "On Being Black," but the famine of scripts turned out to be even worse than the first year's and the station was unable to continue the series.

At the University of Nebraska, public television station KUON used a documentary approach to recreate the contributions of blacks in the settlement of the American West. With a $205,000 grant from the Foundation, KUON produced four sixty-minute color films that depicted blacks who had been cowboys, traders, trappers, pioneers, and cavalrymen.

One of the most popular offerings over public television came from WNET in New York in the form of "Soul!". Under its Project for New Programming, the Foundation in 1968 originally funded twenty one-hour "Soul!" programs that were aired in New York. The reaction was so favorable that the following two years, the Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting supported the production of forty more programs, which were distributed nationally.

With strong emphasis upon music and entertainment, "Soul!" also gave time to Julian Bond, Imamu Baraka, authors Anne Moody and James Baldwin, and others. After the Foundation grants terminated, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting continued to support the show. Although "Soul!" has demonstrated high audience interest, in 1974 only a minority of public television stations voted to continue its existence. As a result the show was terminated.

Unfinished Business

Despite the efforts noted, public television does not serve minority interests adequately according to a 1973 review panel headed by Robert C. Maynard, Associate Editor and Ombudsman of the *Washington Post*.

The panel defined minorities to include not only ethnic minorities but also women, the elderly, adolescents, the physically handicapped, and the retarded. The group examined three weeks of public television's fare with special attention to programs such as "Behind the Lines," "51st State," "Soul!" and "Black Journal."

The panel credited public television with paying more consistent attention to minority concerns than its commercial counterpart. However, the group criticized the quantity and quality of materials produced. As a preliminary corrective it called for the inclusion of more minority group member representatives, women, young people, the elderly, and residents from outside the Northeast in public television decision-making at the national and local levels. It also suggested that public television ought to provide programming on issues of health, finance, politics, the law, and human rights related directly to the needs of minorities "who fall outside the American mainstream." Finally, the panel proposed that the people from neglected minorities ought to be involved in the actual programming in order that the "images of these groups before a mass audience become more natural and realistic than is the case in present-day television. . . ."

Prospects

SINCE 1967 a far greater number of nonwhites have had bylines in the press (though the American Society of Newspaper Editors reported in 1974 that probably no more than 1 percent of the professional newsroom staff came from minority groups) and there are more minority-group members on television working as both journalists and entertainers.

Whether this brings more sensitive coverage of the minority community depends upon a number of subtle factors. A 1968 graduate of the Columbia Journalism School summer program, William Deiz of KGW, Portland, Oregon, remarked, "The [broadcasting] industry is really beginning to open up now, only I would insist it is not enough to be black right now. At least here in the Northwest you might get an interview a little more readily at some stations if you are black – but you had better be 'beautiful' too – by that I mean you had better have some talent as well as that dark skin. . . . The skin might get you in the front door – but who wants to spend his life standing in the hallway?" There is some doubt about how far minority presence in the media is going. Vernon Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League, recently said, "The fact is that the media, after a fling at tokenism and liberalism, is settling back into the spirit of benign neglect of black people."

The successful graduates of minority training programs in journalism have gone beyond the hallway, but the communications industry may not be substantially more sensitive to the minority experience until members of the minorities attain policy-making positions, and so far very few have made it to the executive suites of the mass media. As a recent series on blacks and TV in the *Washington Post* by Joel Dreyfuss put it, "In many ways the influx of blacks into television becomes a microcosmic study of integration in America, presence without power."

Another troublesome aspect for the minority person in the media is the question of possible conflict between group loyalty and traditional journalistic rules of balance and fairness. Tony Brown, producer of "Black Journal" and currently at Howard University, has called these traditions "white rules used by the white media to distort black news." He maintains that a black reporter ought never to forget "his primary loyalty is to other blacks and the movement."

The problem won't go away in the media until it goes away in all of America. It therefore follows that to have a truer balance of content, a better sensitivity for minorities, they must be in a position to be heard and seen in the media.

Emile Milne of the Community News Service thinks the conflict is not irreconcilable. "Every black journalist feels some special accountability and responsibility. The pressure is there. But you have to tell it like it is, positive or negative; if it needs to be told it can't hurt."

A California reporter who was trained in the Columbia program wrote, "I didn't fully appreciate before the delicate position of the black reporter writing about the black movement. One is caught between two opposing

forces, the black community on the one hand – who sees you as some sort of manna from heaven, who will at last tell their side the way it is, and who will give you hell if you don't (as they see it) but little else from then on – and the paper which, out of what it sees as an objective responsibility to the white readership, must carefully peruse your story to make certain it is not slanted to the black side."

The problem won't go away in the media until it goes away in all of America. It therefore follows that to have a truer balance of content, a better sensitivity for minorities, they must be in a position to be heard and seen in the media. Lerone Bennett, a black historian and journalist, observed in 1968, "More than one hundred years ago, the first editorial of the first Negro newspaper, *Freedom's Journal* said, 'Too long have others spoken for us. We want to speak for ourselves.' "

But the problem of reaching Americans who will not read or look at anything about minorities goes beyond the legally gained access, the training of nonwhites, the added content and media sensitivity to minority material. It depends upon the condition of the larger society, which the media shape only in part.

Photographs: 9 – Columbia University (Don Charles); 17 – Office of Communication, United Church of Christ; 20 – Race Relations Reporter; 25 – WNET/13, New York; 27 – KCET-TV, Los Angeles.